



**February 22, 2022**

Legislative Hearing Testimony Submission – General Law Committee

**Raised Bill No. 5146 - AN ACT ESTABLISHING A SUPERMARKET FOOD DONATION PROGRAM**

The Connecticut Food Association, the trade association representing a full spectrum of the retail food industry in Connecticut, appreciates the opportunity to comment on this proposal, which we oppose as it pursues to establish a supermarket food donation program.

In times of emergency, we acknowledge the true resiliency and effectiveness of an established private-public partnership. While much has been done to ensure families have access to food, more can always be accomplished. Our industry has worked and continues to work relentlessly to replenish and restock shelves, while ensuring the cleanliness of stores and safety of frontline associates. Amid keeping things moving, the needs of all of our customers and partners—including the state's most vulnerable citizens—remains a top priority.

Today, every reputable food retailer in the state of Connecticut contributes significant resources to local communities by way of food donations and direct financial support of local civic groups. A more equitable allocation of these charitable resources seems to be the heart of this discussion. With that in mind, I ask you to consider the following:

- Supermarkets are the lifeblood of a community and—besides food donations—also serve as a resource for sustenance, health care, civic engagement, career opportunities, and an engine of overall economic impact created by their presence.
- Every food retailer in CT has its own unique food donation program in place today. These partnerships include hundreds of local supermarkets supporting more than twice that amount of local nonprofits (already) operating in this space.
- Readily available data exists to support the fact that there is a robust statewide food donation program in place that allows critical supply chain flexibility and efficiency if and when market conditions change.
- Mandating a food donation policy or adding regulation does not increase the current charitable food supply—if anything, it could have the unintended consequence of discouraging charitable food donations.
- Maintaining the cold chain—and ultimately the food safety of donated products—is an important consideration in the process.
- The ability to donate frozen animal protein and fresh produce to smaller nonprofit food organizations is impacted by the refrigeration capacity of the receiving entities.
- The state food industry's relationship with CT Foodshare has never been stronger or better aligned; however, we also recognize getting local charitable organizations more access is the goal of the sponsors.
- Food retailers are open to working with all approved nonprofit entities to improve their understanding of our process and/or donation policy.

Thank you for considering the views of the Connecticut Food Association. Please contact me via email at [wsp@ctfoodassociation.org](mailto:wsp@ctfoodassociation.org) if I can provide additional information about our position.

Respectfully submitted,

**Wayne Pesce**